



REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24 , 2021
SAM KING ROOM & ZOOM MEETING
2:00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Wendy Davis (Chair), Jim Bojo, Randy Quick, Craig McDaniel, Mark Cochran, Sammy Rich, Joe Smith, Harry Brock, Chris Jenkins, Artagus Newell, Thom Holt, Matt Harper, Doug Walker, Lisa Smith

IN ATTENDANCE VIA ZOOM:

Sundai Stevenson, Toni Rhinehart, John Druckenmiller (Hometown Headlines), WRGA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairperson Davis called the meeting to order. The minutes of the January 27, 2021 Redevelopment Committee meeting were approved by unanimous consent.

UPDATE ON CITY-OWNED W. 3RD PROPERTY:

Sammy Rich began the update reminding the group that the City had received two proposals to develop the 2.2 acres, one from Broad Street LLC (Ira Levy et al) and the other from FSRE (Four Stones Real Estate with Bob Grigsby et al), in December. They were reviewed by a committee of city staff who ultimately recommended that the city move forward with the FSRE proposal. Levy's project came in with higher-end residential with some retail options. Four Stone's concept was centered more around entertainment with an amphitheater, a brewery and other additions that would tie-in with Grigsby's comprehensive plan involving his earlier purchases in the River District. Rich said the consensus of the group was to move forward with the FSRE project and asked some of the staff to share their thoughts. Lisa Smith, Chris Jenkins, Artagus Newell, Aundi Lesley and Becky Smyth all agreed that the concept would create a "destination" and would encourage out of towners to come visit Rome and also created another outdoor play opportunity. Lesley added that downtown business owners were happy with the project because it compliments what Broad Street was already offering. The project will consist of 4 phases which includes 200 residential units in the first phase. Rich recommends that the committee send this proposal to the Commission and suggested that FSRE present the proposal to the commissioners in the Caucus preceding the next commission meeting on March 8. Commissioner Jim Bojo stated that he is familiar with the Grigsby team and is pleased with the concept and ready to get started. Commissioner Randy Quick added that he feels the project will not create competition between businesses on both sides of the river but will enhance what is already offered. Commissioner Sundai Stevenson agreed with the other comments and Commissioner Mark Cochran stated that he would like assurances that the housing portion will be built and not just the retail and entertainment portions. Everyone agreed that there will be a formal presentation on March 8 by FRSE and the city would move forward from there.

HOUSING UPDATE:

Davis mentioned that there had been much discussion of housing over the last few weeks in committees and at the housing summit. She also recalled the need to have a detailed way to incentivize the building of more housing. Bojo introduced local builder Matt Harper to discuss his ideas to build workforce housing in the city limits and the need for city assistance. Harper explained that the cost to build and develop has increased tremendously. He stated that he had an investor willing to help him develop and build multiple parcels (possibly 500-700) but would only be able to move forward if the city would assist in covering the cost of water and sewer. If the city is able to provide the necessary incentives to move forward, he stated that he could build 1575 square foot open concept homes with 3 bedrooms, 2 baths for under \$250,000. He stated the need to move quickly because of the rapidly rising costs of materials. One of the first areas that Harper would like to develop is a 19 acre parcel located between Ford Road and Maplewood East. With the average lot around $\frac{1}{4}$ of an acre, he would be able to build around 75 homes in this area. He plans to use pre-fabricated trusses and wall panels that they would purchase in bulk, which helps save money on labor and speeds up the build time as well. However, Harper states again that the only way the project will be able to move forward is if the city would pay for the costs of water and sewer. Harper moved on to mention the possibilities of developing 44 acres off of Riverside Parkway and 250 acres between Foxcroft and Woods Road in West Rome. He further stated that he can build out the 19 acre parcel in under 3 years. Davis asked if smaller/less expensive homes could be built and Harper stated that they could possibly look into building some of them smaller, without garages but that it wouldn't be economically feasible to build much smaller. Davis asked for clarification of what Harper meant when he asked for the city to provide water and sewer. Harper stated that as a developer, he would absorb the entire cost of having the water and sewer infrastructure built but would want the city to reimburse them for the water/sewer costs for lots that are developed and sold. He doesn't see that it would be fair to the city to pay for lots that were left undeveloped and unsold. Bojo agreed that this would have to be fair and equitable to all parties and Davis added that whatever the city offered, there would have to be criteria put in place so that it is fair for all going forward.

RIVER DISTRICT STREETScape UPDATE:

Davis mentioned the retreat discussion of streetscape and that we need to start executing the next step. Rich recapped the streetscape progress made on W. 3rd already and the upcoming work on N. 4th Avenue. Rich reminded that \$2 million was earmarked for streetscape in SPLOST funds and that the total estimated cost to complete streetscape would be \$6.7 million. There was discussion regarding which phase should be started next and it was decided to wait on W. 3rd until the FSRE group completes their project. Rich suggested that they start on Phase A, the 5th Avenue Bridge portion, because of the impact it would be linking Broad Street to the River District. DDA Director Lesley stated that the feedback she had received from business owners in the River District is that they just want to see progress and would be happy with whatever phase begins. Harry Brock agreed that work on the bridge should start immediately and hoped that the redesign of the 5th Avenue area included getting rid of telephone poles so that sidewalks can be widened to create room for more walkability, sidewalk cafes and become a traffic calming zone. Bojo and Quick both agreed that it is time to get started and the bridge is the place to start. Davis asked for a motion to develop a proposal to move forward and launch Phase A for presentation to the City Commission at the next meeting. The motion was made by Bojo and the second by Quick. A called meeting of the Public Works Committee will be scheduled before the next commission meeting to develop the specifics of the proposal.

NEW TADS:

Davis reminded that the committee needs to continue the discussion of new TADs going forward. She asked if everyone was ready to move to the North Rome TAD discussion. Bojo suggested they table the discussion until the committee was able to more firmly decide the specific target area or make specific suggestions about what should be done there. Davis hopes to develop a TAD in order to stimulate interest and bring development to the area and not create a TAD in reaction to developer interest as has been done in the past. Discussion moved to the Martha Berry TAD and the future of it as well. Davis asked about an ordinance regarding reoccurring crimes on properties and confiscation of those properties. Davis asked for more information about the ordinance and how many crimes have been recorded. She suggested that Public Safety Committee discuss this in their next meeting.

FEDERAL OPPORTUNITY ZONES:

Davis suggested that she doesn't feel we have any new information to discuss at this meeting, but does not want to forget this topic for future discussion.

NEW TRAIL DEVELOPMENT – KINGFISHER AND SILVER CREEK TRAILS:

Davis suggested that either the Redevelopment Committee or another committee move forward in getting the area of discussion cleaned up. The area of interest includes 10 acres of city-owned property at the north of the river near the Bob Moore Footbridge as well as the area around where Silver Creek and Kingfisher Creek meet. Davis mentioned that she feels a trailhead or landing on the north side of the Etowah would help attract trail walkers and would be great area for an off-leash dog park and landing for fishing in that vicinity. Rich stated that the Trails Committee had recently met to discuss branding and marketing of our trail system which would help bring more people out to use the trails. Rich suggested that Brian Roberts check out the area for environmental issues and once cleared, Public Works could have a clean-up crew begin working on the area.

NWGA REGIONAL HOSPITAL UPDATE:

Davis asked if the \$4 million price tag for the hospital included the bonded indebtedness. Rich explained that yes, it was included in the price and that the lower of two appraised values is the \$4 million bottom line price - the price does not go down as bonded indebtedness is paid off. Rich also mentioned that the cost of demolition is at the high end, approximately \$2 million. He stated that the Rome/Floyd Development Authority is continuing to monitor and is awaiting results of a Phase 2 Environmental Study and any effect that it may have on the value of the property.

BONDED INDEBTEDNESS:

Following up on the bond discussion at the planning retreat, Davis asked Rich to provide information about where the city stands with current water/sewer debt. Rich discussed that although some of our debt is rolling off, there will be upcoming water and sewer debt in the future. He discussed the bond issuance for the 3rd Avenue parking deck and the Recreational Facilities Authority (indoor tennis and the golf bonds) and his concerns about borrowing money even with low interest rates because of the what ifs – what if sales tax revenues plummet, what if the tax digest doesn't grow. No matter how cheap money is, the money borrowed has to be paid back and there must be caution taken to make sure the indebtedness can be paid off. Davis requested a listing of city investments the corresponding dollar

amounts so that she can see some perspective of how borrowed money has been spent over the years. Rich and Finance Director Toni Rhinehart mentioned that several of those large investments actually came from SPLOST funds and not bonds.

ANNEXATION UPDATE:

Randy Quick stated that he has heard the citizens of Celanese and it is apparent that they do not want to be annexed into the city and it is his suggestion that the committee tables the issue of annexing them into the city. He mentioned that if any individual, who is adjacent to city property, wants to annex, then they are welcome to move forward on their own accord. Davis stated that she feels that the voices they heard did not represent the majority of the community. Bojo agreed with Quick and said he will not make someone do something that they do not want to do. He agrees that if there are property owners that want to annex in, they should reach out to the city for assistance. Davis asked if other islands in the city limits should be looked at and discussed. Bojo and Quick agreed that other areas in Rome can be looked at but in regards to Celanese, they have heard from the majority and the annexation discussion needs to end for now.

With their being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:12 p.m.

The next scheduled meeting of the Redevelopment Committee will be March 24, 2021 at 2:30 p.m. in the Sam King Room.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelley Parker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Kelley Parker
Executive Assistant,
City Manager's Office